EAL in Deaf Children
Professional Guidance to Parents

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Key Findings

- Nearly all participants stated it was completely or mostly true that a deaf child can acquire two spoken languages (83% of SLTs stated it was completely true).
- SLTs twice as likely as audiologists, QToDs and ToDs to state it is completely true that deaf children with additional speech and language difficulties can acquire two spoken languages.
- Audiologists 11 times more likely than SLTs to report that exposure to two spoken languages can lead to linguistic confusion in deaf children.
- QToDs/ToDs 13 times more likely than SLTs to report that auditory factors affect the likelihood of oral bilingualism in deaf children.
- Almost 100% of participants stated exposure to 2 spoken languages results in: maintenance of the heritage language and access to culture; improved family relationships and dynamics and better identity/sense of self.
- The majority of participants reported that they would advise parents to speak their heritage language, regardless of whether the parent spoke English proficiently.

Key Themes Identified

QToD: “I advise ... the home language in which they are most fluent and have the richest vocabulary...”

SLT: “Parents ... are worried ... using their home language may make it more difficult for their child to learn English and will confuse them. I have advised them that research evidence does not support this notion.”

Importance of rich language models

Sharing the research evidence with parents

QToD: “Only promoting English isolates the child from their family and culture.”

Heritage language facilitates access to wider family and culture

Aims

- To investigate the beliefs of professionals on the ability of a deaf child with a bilateral severe-to-profound sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL) and cochlear implants (CIs) to acquire two spoken languages.
- To investigate what advice professionals give to parents who have a deaf child with a bilateral severe-to-profound SNHL and CIs on raising their child with two spoken languages.

Methods

Participants included 108 professionals who currently work with deaf children in the UK:

- 47 Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs)
- 11 Audiologists
- 46 Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToDs)
- 4 Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs)

Online questionnaire accessed via onlinesurveys.ac.uk and advertised through email to professionals working in education, healthcare, charity and independent organisations supporting deaf children in the UK.

References

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